

Testimony of

**Gina Guetti**

**Waterford Educator**

Before the

Education Committee

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

I am a 4th-grade teacher in Waterford, CT. I have been teaching for 20 years, 4th grade for the past 9 years. I am not sure what statement you would like to hear from any teacher about teaching over the past 3 years, but I will try! Concerning HB 6884, and in regards to teaching during Covid, I can say that it was extremely difficult and brought about new challenges each day, especially for those of us with school-aged children who were also 'in school' during the pandemic. It was near impossible to teach my child AND teach my entire class. By no means am I upset that we used Zoom and technology as a way of teaching; there are many pros and cons to the way educators taught during those years. As hard as we worked and as much as we tried, there are still gaps in students' learning/skills. Here we are three years after 2020 and students are still struggling in SO MANY WAYS. A number of children also developed anxiety and issues related to their social/emotional needs. Because of the pandemic and hybrid years, we have become part-time parents and social workers to these children, on top of being responsible for teaching them academics as well. I went through the BEST portfolio years ago. In my opinion (obviously), the elimination of standardized portfolio systems for new teachers would make those first few years of teaching much more meaningful and less stressful. New teachers would actually get to focus on students' learning rather than stress over making deadlines and rewriting meaningless papers, which are subjectively graded. The age of children entering kindergarten should have been changed years ago! I teach grade 4, and by the time many of these children get to fourth grade, it is evident that they should have been retained in kindergarten; not just for their academics, but for their social-emotional needs as well. I firmly

believe that if many of these children started school at an appropriate age, they would have all of the tools necessary for being successful each school year. Rather, they are placed on STAT plans, 504s, and IEPs, then passed around from regular education teachers to special education teachers to school social workers, and so on. My guess is that 1 in every 5 or 6 four-year-olds can be successful in starting their kindergarten year off at this age. This is my statement on this bill. I know how hard my team/school has worked over these past 3 years, and we will continue to work this way regardless of the decision of this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

